



2010 AWARD Fellow
Elizabeth Odoyo

Position:	Research officer and MSc student
Institution:	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI)
Country:	Kenya
BSc:	Agriculture, Kenya Methodist University, 2007
Mentored by:	Professor J.B. Okeyo-Owuor Moi University, and Director General of Victoria Institute for Research on Environment and Development (VIRED) International, Kenya

Research Area: Studying the role of wetland ecosystems in carbon sequestration and in mitigating climate change in Kenya.

Elizabeth Odoyo's research focuses on wetlands—some of the most important and threatened ecosystems in the world. She says wetlands are prime targets for exploitation, modification, and destruction by human activities such as overharvesting, drainage, reclamation, pollution, and biological alteration through biotic introductions.

Odoyo is investigating papyrus, a wetland plant that rural women use to make baskets, brooms, mats, furniture, and other items to sell at local markets. "I believe that the knowledge and skills I will gain from my training will enhance this venture," she says. Her current research project involves determining the role of wetland plants in carbon sequestration and mitigating climate change in the Nyando River wetland ecosystem of the Lake Victoria basin. This work is being done as part of her master's degree research at Moi University, with field work being done at VIRED International.

Odoyo grew up in Kenya's Nyanza province, where she observed her widowed mother, who was subordinate staff in a local hospital and a subsistence farmer, using her low pay and the proceeds of the farm to pay her children's school fees. This was often a struggle, she recalls, due to poor harvests resulting from disease and drought.

As an AWARD Fellow, Odoyo says she is looking forward to learning from her mentor. She was an AWARD Fellows' Mentee last year, and says her mentor, Miriam Judith Otipa, a research officer at KARI, encouraged her to go back to school. "After that encouragement, I never looked back, and I hope to graduate with a master's degree in Environmental Studies in 2011.

Odoyo is one of 180 African woman scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. For more information, please visit www.awardfellowships.org